"*My Guru Maharaja was attempted to be killed. Twenty-five thousand rupees were raised fund for bribing the police officer. He told me personally.* ***The Navadvipa, Navadvipa Gosais, they wanted to kill him*** *. So preaching work is always risky.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, lecture on lecture on Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.2.5, given in Vrndavana, on October 16th, 1972, **emphasis added**)
"*A case can definitely be made that our Srila Prabhupada stressed siksa. As a matter of fact, Sivarama Maharaja in his recent book not only says that, but also concludes that* ***Srila Prabhupada considered diksa to be simply another kind of siksa*** *. This is certainly creating lots of ammo for both the ritvik and the Gaura-nagari camps.*"
(Bhaktarupa dasa, an old COM post, no longer online, **emphasis added**)

Dear BIF,
How to begin? In this letter there'll be some history related to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, and a little bit about my experience of the ISKCON org. But I've been thinking about maybe throwing in one more quote. This one being an excerpt from Mahavidya's article "More On Seeing God":

> "*I also agree with Mahesh Raja prabhu that Srila Prabhupada is our siksa Guru,*
> *He can also be everyone's siksa Guru.*
> *That's straightforward enough.*
> *His instructions are there for everyone, should they wish to take them.*
> *But, please explain just how does Srila Prabhupada gives Diksa initiation after his physical departure?*
> *Is this another mystical esoteric claim that no one can verify?*"

I like the two questions in the excerpt, the second question especially.
In 2000, in Philadelphia I sat in front of a fire, and participated in a ceremony where Ravindra Svarupa was present. I was given a name and beads. That much is simple enough. But how did I receive "*diksa* initiation" from Ravindra? How did it take place? Did I even really receive "*diksa* initiation" from Ravindra? If one answers either "yes" or "no" to this last question, isn't this simply another mystical esoteric claim that no one can verify? How does my direct personal experience of the events of that day (and afterwards) factor into all of this?
I could assert something like: "*In 2000, in Philadelphia, I did not receive 'diksa initiation' from Ravindra Svarupa. The ceremony was largely psychodrama.*" And actually, I do assert this.
If someone objects to my assertion, how can they respond? They might say something like: "*Yes you did*", perhaps followed by an explanation of their understanding of what constitutes "*diksa* initiation". But can a person really prove that my assertion is wrong? Can they verify it? I know that a person could describe the external (*exoteric*) events that took place in the Philly temple on that day. Would a description of those *exoteric* events be sufficient to prove or verify that "*diksa* initiation" had taken place? When we say that Krsna Consciousness is a science, do we mean it? Or are we co-opting a word, in hopes of attracting gullible people?
Is *diksa* not itself an *esoteric* process? Isn't it ultimately about the transformation of consciousness, brought about through received transcendental knowledge? *Divya jnanam ksapayati iti diksa? Divya-jnan hrde prokasito*?
In a 2007 article from the Sun, I wrote:
"*If it had been clear to me in 2000 that Srila Prabhupada is qualified and available to be my current link to the parampara, and my point of absolute surrender, then I find it hard to imagine that I would have gone ahead with the initiation ceremony that I chose to participate in.*
"*Instead, I would have had gratitude for the positive things that I learned from the ISKCON leader who I had previously 'aspired' for. But I wouldn't have played pretend, nor attempted to force myself to see this ISKCON leader as my current link to the parampara. Chances are that I might have eventually drifted away from him. I drifted away from this leader anyway, despite the ceremony.*
"*Basically I didn't have sufficient confidence in this man to surrender to him fully, as my current link to the parampara. I felt like I was engaging in a charade, and eventually the whole thing felt too empty to continue.*"
Let me say that the topics discussed below are no longer at the front of my consciousness. The work that BIF is doing, in connection with a monumental offense that may have been committed against Srila Prabhupada, seems much more important than any of what's in this letter. If, as you and some others put forward, Srila Prabhupada was truly given poison with homicidal intent, then that is something really huge. A huge offense that would have to be completely rectified before Srila Prabhupada's movement could truly move forward with its intended potency. That being said, it may be that what I touch on here isn't wholly unrelated to the work that you're doing.
Let's transition into some history. Some people (smarta Brahmins, caste goswamis..etc..) say that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta was never initiated by Srila Gaurakisora dasa Babaji. This assertion seems to be based on a particular understanding of the meaning of initiation. The different understandings of initiation, that held by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and that held by the traditional non-Saraswata Vaisnava lines, also seem to shine a light on our present situation, and on our relationship with Srila Prabhupada.
Some of the quoted excepts in this letter will come from scholars associated with non-Saraswata lines. I think they have unique and valuable insights on this topic. They have contact with Srila Prabhupada's teachings, are aware of certain controversies in the ISKCON organization and in the Gaudiya Matha, and are not blinkered by some of the taboos that may have developed in those two aforementioned organizations. Also, since they have much less of a vested interest, and are freer to go where the evidence seems to lead. There will be various quotes from different corners of the Vaisnava world, and undoubtedly at least some of the people quoted will be out of favor with at least some of your readers. We can choose to look at all these quotes, and see how they fit in light of Srila Prabhupada's teachings.
When I first came in contact with KC teachings in the mid-nineties, so much that I encountered there felt like home. It felt right, it made sense, and resonated intuitively at a deep level. A glaring exception was how some of Srila Prabhupada's followers talked about initiation. That part didn't make sense at all. To paraphrase something I once read on the Audarya Forum: everybody tells you that you need it (initiation) but nobody seems to know exactly what it is.
Years later, after having gone through the ISKCON machine, I found some quotes from Srila Prabhupada that tie in to the quote from Bhaktarupa, included at the top of this letter. Quotes that speak about initiation (*diksa*) in terms of a transfer of transcendental knowledge (*divya-jnana*) from teacher to student. Quotes like these, for example:

"*Diksa means... Di, divya-jnanam,* ***transcendental knowledge*** *, and ksa, iksa. Iksa means darsana, to see, or ksapayati, explain. That is called diksa.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, July 29th, 1968, **emphasis added**)

"*Diksa means initiation. Di means divya jnanam, and ksa means ksapayati.* ***From the day of initiation, you simply get spiritual knowledge*** *, transcendental knowledge.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, lecture on Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.16.1, given in Los Angeles, on December 29th, 1973, **emphasis added**)

"*So initiation means, the Sanskrit word is diksa. Diksa, divya jnanam ksapayati iti diksa. Divya-jnana.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, initiation lecture, June 17th, 1976)

"*Diksa means divya-jnanam ksapayati iti diksa.* ***Which explains the divya-jnana, transcendental, that is diksa*** *. Di, divya, diksanam. diksa. So divya-jnana,* ***transcendental knowledge*** *...*"

"***Diksa actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge*** *by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila, 4.111, purport, **emphasis added**)

"*This is the purpose of diksa, or initiation.* ***Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge*** *of spiritual consciousness.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, purport to CC

(Srila Prabhupada, Room Conversation, January 27th, 1977, in Bhubaneswar, **emphasis added**)

"*Then you can say 'Yes, I know everything' Diksa. Diksa, initiation, diksa, this Sanskrit word, diksa, means divya-jnanam ksipayati* ***ask from spiritual master with service and surrender the transcendental knowledge*** *. The more you ask, you become a man of knowledge. Then you can challenge, and then 'Yes, I know everything'.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, Morning Walk, June 11th, 1974, **emphasis added**)

"*Di... Divya. There are two words, divya-jnana.* ***Divya-jnana means transcendental, spiritual knowledge*** *. So divya is di, and jnanam, ksapayati, explaining, that is ksa, di-ksa. This is called diksa, diksa, the combination.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, lecture on Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.15, given in Auckland, on February 22nd, 1973, **emphasis added**)

"*Oh. So this is... So many devotees are being initiated. So initiation means, the Sanskrit word is dīksa. Dīksa,* ***divya jnanam ksapayati iti dīksa*** *. Divya-jnana. There are two kinds of knowledge: divya and mundane.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, Initiation Lecture, given in Toronto, on June 17th, 1976 , **emphasis added**)

"*Well, initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge. [break] ...knowledge.* ***Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing.*** "
(Srila Prabhupada, Press Interview, October 16th, 1976, Chandigarh, **emphasis added**)

"*So they came to me, and I saw the same saintly persons whom I met 1922. I was very glad to receive. In this way, my connection was more intimate with my Guru Maharaja. And in 1936, or* ***1933, I was initiated officially, although I was initiated 1922. But officially, I was initiated in 1933*** *, although from 1922 to 1933 I was always thinking of His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, evening lecture on His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada's Appearance Day, given in Gorakhpur, on February 15th, 1971, **emphasis added**)

" ***The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears*** *. Just like my spiritual master. In 1922 he said in our first meeting, you are educated boys, why don't you preach this cult. That was the beginning, now it is coming to fact.*"
(Srila Prabhupada, letter to Jadurani, New Vrindaban, 4th of September, 1972, **emphasis added**)

Discovering these, and others like them had a powerful effect on me. Things finally began to make some sense.
This letter will posit *diksa* as a process. The essential and core aspect of that process will be seen as the transfer of transcendental knowledge. The ceremony associated with this process will be seen as secondary, not essential.
This is a good time to introduce the term "*bhagavati diksa*", a term that I understand to be associated with Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's conception of initiation. The term doesn't appear in the Vedabase, as far as I'm aware. But when Srila Prabhupada is speaking of *diksa* in terms of "*divya-jnanam ksapayati*", I assume that he's referring to *bhagavati diksa*, or something along similar lines. The ceremony often associated with the *diksa* process I will separate out, for the purpose of this letter, and put in the category "*pancaratrika*".
Jagadananda (Jan Brzezinski, formerly also known as Hiranyagarbha) is a scholar associated with the line of Lalita Prasad Thakura, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's brother. Below is something he posted to the Audarya Fellowship Forum (**emphasis** added):
"*After carefully going through Brahmana o Vaishnava (the text of the speech Siddhanta Saraswati gave in Balighai, Medinipur in 1911), I believe that the* ***cornerstone of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's reform consisted in devaluating Pancharatrika initiation in favour of a new concept, that of Bhagavati diksha*** *. He explains Bhagavati diksha in Brahmana or Vaishnava tradition as being equivalent to the instruction Hari Das Thakur to the prostitute, where Hari Das says that he has taken diksha (Prabhupada translates 'vow') in the sacrifice of the Holy Name, i.e., of chanting a crore of names in a month).*
"*I assume that since there is little to support Saraswati's ever taking Pancharatrika diksha from Gaura Kishor Das Babaji, and it also seems that the timing is right (Saraswati took initiation from GKDB in 1901 and started his billion name vow not long thereafter), that this is how Saraswati understood Bhagavati initiation.*
"*Saraswati may have meant more than simply Hari Nam initiation, as the expression 'bhajana siksha' is also bandied about, but he also argues that* ***mantra-initiation is not particularly important since archana as a devotional process is secondary to chanting the Holy Name*** *, to* ***which*** *end he quotes the relevant Bhagavata-sandarbha section on the necessity of being initiated to engage in archana.*
"*Furthermore,* ***the Bhagavata parampara does not seem to need a direct physical connection with the preceding acharya*** *, so it is not altogether out of the question that Saraswati intended (or would have approved) an institution modeled along the lines that you and the Ritviks describe. Even so, since I assume that you would consider puja or archan to be a necessary part of Prabhupada's institution, some kind of Pancharatrika initiation would be necessary for that purpose. Some kind of ritual initiation signifying membership in the institution would also presumably be part of your vision. This has traditionally been one of the functions of the Pancharatrika initiation, so why not connect the two? It seems more logical to identify the connection as being directly with Prabhupada rather than eliminating initiation entirely.*"
When the topic of initiation is discussed, eventually and invariably the topic of "the tradition" also comes up. The question to ask would be: whose tradition is it? Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's tradition? Or the tradition of the traditional *parivars*, the non-Saraswata lines?
The ISKCON organization's Bhakti Vikasa wrote a 3-volume book about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. I haven't read that book. But I did find an excerpt from it, transcribed by someone, on an internet discussion forum. The **emphasis** is added by the original poster:

"*In 1932 Visvambharananda dasa Babaji, on behalf of many babajis and caste Goswamis in Vrndavana, published a book opposing Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati and his Mission, citing extensively from sastra to support his arguments. He challenged that the line of parampara traced from Jagannatha dasa Babaji through Bhaktivinoda Thakura to Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji and then to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was unauthorized. Visvambharananda claimed that although Sarasvati Thakura was supposed to be the disciple of Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji, he was disqualified in several ways. First, Sarasvati Thakura did not accept as bona fide the recognized lineage of Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji, whose guru was in the Advaita-parivara. Furthermore, since Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji had never used a japa-mala, and had not given one to Sarasvati Thakura at the time of initiation but had simply placed some Navadvipa dust into his hand, Visvambharananda argued that such an initiation was not bona fide.* ***The implication was that Sarasvati Thakura had not actually received pancaratrika-diksa from Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji, so how could he confer it upon others?*** *Nor had Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji worn a brahmana thread,* ***so on what authority did Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati wear one?***

"*Moreover, Visvambharananda argued, Sarasvati Thakura claimed to be a follower of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who was initiated by the caste Goswami Bipina Bihari. Why then did Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati not accept guru-parampara by seminal descent?* ***Bhaktivinoda Thakura had given him a Nrsimha mantra for worshiping the Deity, yet Sarasvati Thakura was giving a Radha-Krsna mantra for this purpose. Wherefrom did he derive this mantra, and on whose authority did he distribute it?*** *Visvambharananda further objected that since Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was a sannyasi without a sannyasa guru, how could he give sannyasa to others?*

"*Sarasvati Thakura responded by explaining the concept of bhagavata-parampara, or siksa-parampara. He maintained that the essence*

of parampara lies in the transmission of transcendental knowledge, not merely in a list of contiguous names. The life of the parampara is maintained by the maha-bhagavatas, who embody the essence of scriptural knowledge. Therefore, to trace the parampara through such maha-bhagavatas truly represents parampara.

"*He said, 'Bhaktivinoda Thakura is Kamala Manjari, a personal associate of Radharani. He ordered me to establish daiva-varnasrama. I must obey his order. The acarya is not under the sastra. The acarya can make sastra. Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the acarya, has inspired me in various ways. By his mercy and that of Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja and the previous acaryas we are going on, not caring for the precise technicalities of smartas.*

"'*Although this concept of bhagavata-parampara appears to be new, it is based on the essential understanding of the scriptures. Something new given by an acarya but based on sastra is called vaisistya (a special characteristic). Acaryas Ramanuja and Madhva both apparently introduced something new, but because their teachings were based on sastra they came to be accepted. Phalena pariciyate: 'An action should be understood by its result.' My commitment to devotional service and my preaching activities speak for themselves. Owl-like persons cannot see this, but those who are honest will accept it.*'"

The above introduces us to some of the disagreements between Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and members of traditional *parivars*.

Let's say that initiation's a mango. We know from Srila Prabhupada's Elevation to Krsna Consciousness , that...

"*If we want to purchase a mango from the market, we must at least know what type of food a mango is and what it looks like.*"

We have to be clear on what *diksa* actually is. The mango is not the box it comes in. Mistaking the mango for the box can cause heartache, and can cause us to side-step the nourishment that is the mango.

The controversy about how Srila Bhaktisiddhanta supposedly never received initiation frames "initiation" in a certain way. And only via that particular frame is there any cause for controversy.

If we understand *diksa* as based on the transmission of sound vibration and transcendental knowledge, from the realized teacher to the heart of the qualified student, at a certain stage of the student's development, then there's really no cause for controversy. Things only get messy and controversial if we understand *diska* primarily as a ceremony.

As Dhira Govinda writes in a Sun article (**emphasis** added):

" ***The disciplic succession in the line of Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta is based on sound vibration, not on the formal initiation ceremony*** *. Through sound vibration transcendental knowledge is conveyed. This is the essential aspect of the process of initiation.* ***And this essential aspect is not dependent on formal initiation*** *, though the processes of formal initiation are meant to serve and support the essential component of the initiation process, receiving transcendental knowledge.*"

In an article at Krishnascience.info, Ekanatha is quoted as follows (**emphasis** added):

"*Jiva Gosvami quotes one verse from the Agamas (Visnu-yamala) in anuccheda 283 of the Bhakti-sandarbha. There it is stated that* ***diksa means that one receives 'divya-jnana' from the guru and that this 'divya-jnana' destroys the seeds of one's sinful desires*** *. But this is really all. He doesn't say that this must be done by some formality.* ***In other words, we may also conclude that a person who hears divya-jnana, and whose doubts and sinful desires are consequently destroyed, must thus be considered initiated*** *. This very state can therefore also be attained by siksa.*"

In the same article, Bhanu Swami is quoted (**emphasis** added):

"*Gangamata Goswamini didn't perform yajna. No one in Gaudiya Vaisnava sampradaya did yajna for initiations. They just gave out mantras without much fanfare.* ***There is pancaratric ceremony including yajna for Vaisnava initiation, but the origins of the yajna we perform seem to come solely from the custom set up by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati*** *to give upanayanam Vedic samskara after giving Vaisnava mantras.*"

We can move on to another excerpt from something that Jagadananda posted to the Audarya forum (**emphasis** added):

"*All of this can quite easily be resolved if we remember that Siddhanta Saraswati himself NEVER claimed to have received Pancharatrika initation from Babaji Maharaj, but Bhagavati diksha.*

"*The debate thus shifts to the following: What constitutes bhagavati diksha?*

"*We have been debating this issue for years. Have a close look at Saraswati Thakur's 'Brahman o Vaishnava' book. There he speciifically states that the* ***Bhagavata parampara is not dependent on Pancharatrika initiation*** *. Saraswati deliberately* ***separated himself from the Pancharatrika 'mantra businessmen'*** *and started a new sampradaya.*

"*What is interesting is that* ***subsequent to Saraswati Thakur, legitimacy in the Gaudiya Math has once again be established by Pancharatrika*** *initiation.* ***The Ritvikvadis, for instance, claim that the system of Bhagavati diksha to Srila Prabhupada is still possible, and that the external act of Pancharatrika initiation is a mere formality. This is exactly Saraswati Thakur's position*** *.*

"*There are a number of Srila Prabhupada quotes, especially from his letters, that also support this.*"

Weird Al Yancovik's song " Weasel Stomping Day " has the great lines: "*Why we do it, who can say?*", and: "*It's tradition, that makes it okay*".

"*It's against the tradition! It's against sastra!*", people sometimes exclaim. Everybody's a Vaisnava scholar these day, it seems.

Here's an excerpt from a blog post by Jagadananda:

"*In fact, there are other, objective criteria by which one can measure a person's spiritual acumen, and the reliance on external signs like initiation for legitimacy is only superficially helpful. In this case, however, initiation means more than the possibility of perfection, it means the adoption of external rites and rituals, external modes of dress and other kinds of cultural distinction. The traditional Gaudiya Vaishnavas have a 500-year-old culture that has to a great extent been jettisoned by the Gaudiya Math.*"

For our purpose, let's replace the word "culture", in the text above, with the word "tradition". Jettisoned. That means: discarded, abandoned, thrown overboard.

I wonder if the conception of initiation that is currently held in the ISKCON organization ultimately comes from groups that Srila Prabhupada might refer to as *babajis* and caste *goswamis*. That is to say those who would refer to themselves as the traditional *parivars*.

I wonder if a misunderstanding of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's conception of initiation was carried over into the various splinters of what was once the Gaudiya Matha. This misunderstanding might well have been influenced by ideas held by the surrounding culture. By "surrounding culture" I'm referring to the *babajis*, caste *goswamis*, and other groups that might fall under the umbrella term "traditional *parivar*".

I wonder if this conception of initiation, the one that equates *diksa* with a ceremony, and seems to emphasize physical presence over most other considerations, traveled thusly:

traditional parivars ----> splinters of what was once the Gaudiya Matha ----> ISKCON organization

I remember getting a CD-ROM that had on it a bunch of quotes from Srila Prabhupada about his Godborthers. The general theme seemed to be to keep a distance. We have, for example, the line from a 1974 letter to Rupanuga: "*They cannot help us in our movement, but they are very competent to harm our natural progress.*"

If Srila Prabhupada were to see his Godbrothers as purely passing on what they all received from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, then there would be no cause for concern. But instead, in his letter to Rupanuga, Srila Prabhupada states: "*So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately because instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them.*"

Based on one version of the story, it's told that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta made various enemies. He spoke strongly, and some people didn't like it. His disciples would be hearing "*Your guru's off*". It may be that under all of this external pressure, ideas from the surrounding

culture, ideas opposed by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, eventually made their way into what used to be the Gaudiya Matha. Some of those ideas might then have subsequently made their way in to the ISKCON organization, via contact with some of Srila Prabhupada's Godbrothers, perhaps helping to form the current conception of what "the tradition" is.

The Srila Bhaktisiddhanta documentary " The Universal Teacher " I also found worth watching. You get a taste of some of what Srila Bhaktisiddhanta was facing. There's one segment in the video that sticks in my mind, where Tripurari is saying:

"*They would cite the philosophy, and question his initiation. And this and so many things. And doctrines came up in opposition to him. So many fine detailed points. Ignoring his emphasis on...uh...being the enemy of hypocrisy and emphasis on serving disposition.*"

Neal Delmonico (Nitai) left the ISKCON organization in the 1970s, and has written about it in his Nitai Zine. He is, as far as I understand, associated with a traditional *parivar*, a traditional non-Saraswata line. Still, if one reads him a certain way, he really does shine a light on the genius of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, perhaps sometimes unintentionally. This same genius we see shining forth in Srila Prabhupada.

As we march on, let's keep in mind two guiding principles. (1) Srila Bhaktisiddhanta received initiation. (2) The mango is not the box it comes in.

The following is from an article in issue # 7 of Nitai Zine (**emphasis** added):

"*In the last issue, I said I would describe my departure from ISKCON and some of my experiences both before and after leaving. The beginning of the end occurred when Dr. Kapoor dropped his bombshell on me,* ***informing me that Bhaktisiddhanta was not properly initiated*** *. When, after several days, the shock finally subsided somewhat, I began to consider my options. I had by then left Prabhupad's traveling entourage where I had for almost three years been the Sanskrit editor, and had settled in Vrindaban.*"

Next comes something from issue # 1 (**emphasis** added):

"*The main reason for my departure from ISKCON was that* ***I came to believe (and I still believe) that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvat never received proper initiation into the Caitanya Vaisava sampradaya (community)*** *. This revelation absolutely shook my world to pieces. I remember sitting on the roof of ISKCON's Vrindaban guest house the following day sadly watching the sun come up. It seemed like a different sun and the world I saw was not the one I had been familiar with. It was now a strange and frightening one. For weeks I had no idea what I was going to do. The man who broke the news to me was Dr. OBL Kapoor, elder savant of the Caitanya Vaisava tradition and member of the Gaudiya Math (his initiation name in the GM was Adikesava Das).*"

(...)

" ***Why did I come to believe that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvat was never initiated? This was almost universally the reason ex-members of the Gaudiya Math gave for their own departures from that organization*** *. I had always been told that after the death of Bhaktisiddhanta in 1937, the Gaudiya Math gradually disintegrated as a result of the struggle for power and greed. The actual impetus I learned was more principled than that. It was the result of the discovery of the* ***inauthenticity of Bhaktisiddhanta's initiation*** *. The man who began the fracture of the GM was Bhaktiprasada Puri Das Goswami, known before his renunciation as Anantavasudeva Das, the leader of the GM who was handpicked by Bhaktisiddhanta himself. His reason was precisely his own discovery of the* ***fundamental flaw in the parampara of the Gaudiya Math*** *. After a four-month long series of lectures on the Bhakti-sandarbha of Sri Jiva Gosvamin, begun in Bengal and completed in Vrindaban, he called all the members of the Math together, especially the sannyasis, and announced his own departure from the institution. He also informed them that their own efforts were in vain.* ***Without the proper initiation of their teacher, Bhaktisiddhanta, the mantras he gave them in initiation were useless*** *. The institution of sannyasa, too, the renounced order of life according to the system of asramas or stages in a exemplary Hindu life, which was instituted by Bhaktisiddhanta in Caitanya Vaisavism, was also groundless (since Bhaktisiddhanta had given it to himself). He advised all the sannyasis to go home and get married. Their pursuit of sannyasa was a sham and a waist [sic] of time. Most importantly of all he advised them that for their own spiritual good they get properly initiated from an authentic lineage within the Caitanya tradition. This I heard from several aged Vaisnavas in Vrindaban and Nabadwip who knew Puri Das personally and who left along with him or some time shortly afterwards.*"

Again I'll assert that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta received initiation, in case my meaning isn't getting through. If we understand *diksa* and *parampara* as a flow of transcendental knowledge, then there's no cause for worry. But what all of this does show is that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's tradition, the one that he passes on to Srila Prabhupada, and which Srila Prabhupada then passes on to us, is distinct from the tradition of the traditional *parivars*.

Below is an excerpt from the book Back to Godhead 1944-1960, The Pioneer Years . The article is titled "Identity of Lord Chaitanya", and is originally from March 20th, 1960. Srila Prabhupada writes (**emphasis** added):

"*Srila Rupa Goswami and Srila Sanatan Goswami both are principal followers of Sri Swarup Damodar Goswami who acted as the most confidential servitor and constant companion of Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu whose name was known as Viswambhar in His early life.*

" ***And from Srila Rupa Goswami, Srila Raghunath Das Goswami comes as the direct disciple*** *and the author of Sri Chaitanya Caritamrita i. e., Sri Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami stands to be his direct follower.*

" ***From Goswami Krishna Das Kaviraj the direct disciple is Srila Narottam Das Thakur who accepted Viswanath Cakravarti as his servitor*** *. Viswanath Chakrabarty accepted Jagannath Das Babajee from whom Srila Bhaktivinode Thakore was initiated and Srila Gour Kishore Das Babajee the spiritual master of Om Vishnupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad-the Divine spiritual Master of our humbleself.*"

This *parampara* is similar to the one we find at the beginning of Srila Prabhupada's commentary on the Sri Caitanya Caritamrta. Look at it carefully before we move on. This next bit is taken from an online discussion forum. See how a person affiliated with a traditional *parivar* might respond to the disciplic succession given above (**emphasis** added).

Regarding Bhaktisiddhanta's version of the rest of the guru-parampara:

Sanatana Gosvami was actually the disciple of Vidyavacaspati (external Diksa). (disciple of Sri Caitanya as per Gita, true Diksa)
Rupa Gosvami was a disciple of Sanatana Gosvami.
Jiva Gosvami was a disciple of Rupa Gosvami.
Raghunatha das Gosvami was a disciple of Yadunandana Acarya.
Narottama Das Thakura was a disciple of Lokanatha Gosvami, not of Krsna das Kaviraja .
Visvanatha Cakravarti was a disciple of Radha Ramana Cakravarti and ***never met his would-be guru Narottama, for they lived a century apart .***
Baladeva Vidyabhusana was a disciple of Radha Damodara Gosvami, not of Visvanatha Cakravarti.
Jagannatha das Babaji lived 150 years after his would-be guru Baladeva Vidyabhusana.
Bhaktivinoda was a disciple of Vipin Bihari Gosvami, not of Jagannath das Babaji.

These two different versions of the story seem to come from different understandings of what initiation is. Srila Prabhupada has some wonderful statements about *diksa*, and it's relation to *divya-jnanam*. I encourage us to seek them out. That stuff will change your life, if you let it. In a way, those statements from Srila Prabhupada should really be enough for us. **The thing is, you'll find that a surprising number of persons who present themselves as followers of Srila Prabhupada, of various stripes, really don't give a damn what Srila Prabhupada said. Convinced as they are that they know the *sastra* and "the tradition".**

Which brings me to a comment that Dhira Govinda made, and that appears on a mirror of the Prominent Link website (**emphasis** added):

"*This discussion of 'tradition' is interesting, and thought-provoking. As Alex Prabhu indicates above,* ***'tradition' is sometimes used to support the current system in ISKCON (or in present gaudiya math or in follower of Gaur Govinda Maharaj)*** *. An implication of this is that 'tradition' is of one particular flavor, which clearly isn't the case if we examine the tradition of our sampradaya. We might not generally think of 'tradition' as indicating that a disciple initiates while his initiator is still present. However, preceptors such as Brahma and Vyasa are present, and generations of their spiritual descendants have initiated. Generally we think of tradition as implying that when the Vaisnava who conducted the formal initiation ceremony passes away, then the initiate accepts disciples, meaning that the initiate conducts initiation ceremonies.* ***As is increasingly understood, the tradition of our parampara is not based on the performance of initiation ceremonies, and thus the standard of tradition described in the previous sentence does not apply*** *, though of course in some instances the performance of the initiation ceremony is performed by the same Vaisnava who is the direct link to the parampara.* ***The tradition of our parampara is that sometimes the links are not even on the same planet at the same time, during any part of the course of their lives.***

Divyapurusadas made this following table ;

Parampara tradition by According to		
Srila Prabhupada		
In Gita as it is (Parampara links)	in BTG March 20th, 1960 (transcendental parampara)	Bhaktisiddhanta (as per who give them formal initiation according to pancharatrika viddhi)
21. Isvara Puri, (Nityananda, Advaita)		Vidyavacaspati
22. Lord Caitanya	Swarup Damodar	Sanatan Goswami
23. Rupa, (Svarupa, Sanatana)	Rupa Sanatan Goswamis	Rupa Gosvami
24. Raghunath, Jiva	Raghunath Das Goswami	Jiva Goswami
25. Krishna Das Kaviraj	Krishna Das Kaviraj	Raghunath Das; disciple of Yadunandana Acarya
26. Narottama	Narottam Das Thakur	Narottama Das Thakura; disciple of Lokanatha Gosvami
27. Viswanath Cakravarti	Viswanath Cakravarti (never met narottama)	Visvanatha Cakravarti; disciple of Radha Ramana
28. (Baladeva) Jagannath Das Babaji	Jagannath Das Babaji	Baladeva Vidyabhusana; disciple of Radha Damodar Goswami. Jagannatha das Babaji lived 150 years after his guru Baladeva Vidyabhusana So, he never saw his initiating guru
29. Bhaktivinoda	Bhaktivinode Thakur	Bhaktivinode Thakur initiated by Vipin Bihari Goswami (caste goswami)
30. Gaur-kishora	Gaur Kishore Das Babaji	Gaur Kishore Das Babaji never had any ceremony nor had a japa
31. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati	Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati	Bhaktisiddhanta never had any ceremony for harinam, brahman or sanyas
32. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada	AC Bhaktivedanta swami	Duly initiated

" ***Thus, there are several anomalies to the 'standard tradition' in our own parampara, to the extent that I believe we must consider the relevance of this conception of the 'standard tradition'*** *, with 'the guru' being the devotee who conducts the ceremony, and when he passes away then the disciple accepts disciples, etc. It seems that this is not our tradition,* ***though in some cases the precedents of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya overlap with this, apparently cursory, sense of tradition*** *. Of course we learn from various traditions, and even awareness of misapprehensions of them. While such historical study informs our practice and understanding, I think it important that it not overshadow or interfere with a direct consciousness of Srila Prabhupada's intentions and instructions, which sometimes conform with tradition and sometimes not. For me, an understanding of 'acarya' is that Srila Prabhupada is empowered to diverge from tradition, powerfully conveying to us the essence of the message from Sri Krsna in a manner perfectly applicable to our situation.*"

And what if Srila Prabhupada is not really diverging from tradition? What if Srila Prabhupada is passing on to us what he received from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta?

Here's another excerpt from that blog post by Jagadananda (**emphasis** added):

"*There were many reasons that Saraswati Thakur felt incapable of reforming Gaudiya Vaishnavism from within the system, so he broke away.* ***But break away he did, let us make no mistake*** *. I repeat this again for all those in the Gaudiya Math and Iskcon who still try to establish some kind of diksha relationship between the various members of their Parampara system. Saraswati Thakur created a "new"* ***Bhagavati parampara whose basis is not Pancharatrika initiation .*** "

Before we jump to the next quote, let's get some things straight. For our purpose, let's understand the words "*diksha* relationship" in the text above as referring to a ceremony, or as Jagadananda writes later on: "*Pancharatrika* initiation". Remember, the mango's not the box. There may well be a real *diksa* relationship between the various members of our *parampara*, and if we're not blinkered by the conception of *diksa* as a ceremony, then we can more easily see that relationship.

We continue with some more comments from Jagadananda, taken from a post to the Audarya forum (**emphasis** added):

"*Historically speaking, we have a number of conflicting reports, but I think that we can take it on the evidence provided by Saraswati himself that (1) he never took Pancharatrika initiation from Gaura Kishor Das Babaji Maharaj; (2) this was a deliberate choice on his part (or perhaps that of his guru); (3) that* ***he held Pancharatrika initiation to be subordinate to Bhagavati diksha*** *and that therefore* ***one who had the latter could give the former, even without having received the same*** *.*

" ***Unfortunately these ideas are a bit revolutionary for many of us to comprehend. This may be attributable to a certain 'sthula buddhi'*** *(please see the discussion on the currently active diksha thread on this forum).* ***However, I would say that the majority of people in Iskcon and the Gaudiya Math have either not understood or not been able to communicate this fundamental premise about initiation , even though Sridhar Maharaj clearly stated that the Gaudiya Math was a 'siksha' sampradaya, not a 'diksha' sampradaya.*** ***As I said, the adherence to Pancharatrika norms in the period subsequent to Saraswati Thakur are proof enough of this*** *. (Pancharatrika initiation is necessary for an institution, to establish legitimacy.)*

" ***This idea is not without merit and I believe that it existed prior to Saraswati Thakur himself*** *. On the whole, the idea is that we all belong to a family of devotees who follow the ideals of Rupa and Raghunath. Saraswati Thakur chose to separate himself from the other 'followers of Rupa and Raghunath' for numerous reasons, most of which you are no doubt familiar with.*"

While we're on the topic of Sridhara, the Gaudiya Matha, and the Audarya forum, below's something that I found there a few years ago. A comment written by Audarya-lila, a follower of Tripurari (**emphasis** added):

"*Diksha is a two way affair - a relationship. It is not a one time thing where one recieves a mantra and then it's done. We develop gradually in our spiritual lives.* ***As I understand it - the process goes on forever*** *, but in terms of being 'complete' - when one reaches to the stage of bhava then real spiritual life begins to dawn. Until such time there will be many ups and downs, trials and tribulations - but when one is fixed -nistha - then some genuine taste (bhava) begins to arise in the sadhaka.*

"*Sri Guru is there throughout the development of the sadhaka to guide and help the disciple progress. Sridhara Maharaja has spoken in another way about spiritual life - he said 'we are all students forever.* ***Since diksha is the transmission of divya jnana, or realized knowledge - and that is constantly unfolding - one could say that Diksha continues on forever*** *."*

Over the course of July 14th-17th, 2007, I corresponded with Dhira Govinda by email about an aspect of Srila Prabhupada's teachings on initiation. We ended up including part of that correspondence in a Sampradaya Sun article. And I'm including that part below:

Dhira Govinda dasa : (...) "*Suppose we hear from Srila Prabhupada, and based on this hearing we chant sixteen rounds per day, rise early, study his books, participate in Hari Nam kirtan and bhajan, etc. So, someone in such a situation might claim 'I am receiving transcendental knowledge from Srila Prabhupada, and this is the essence of initiation, so I am initiated by Srila Prabhupada.' I think, though, that this would be a shallow understanding, or a misunderstanding, of the process. To understand how and why, and to avoid a cheap sort of pseudo-PL model, it is important to grasp a distinction between siksa and diksa.*

"*My understanding is that the person described in the paragraph above is receiving siksa from Srila Prabhupada. (...) It is knowledge received through the external senses, though not the essential divya-jnana, spiritual knowledge received in the heart of the soul, as Lord Brahma was initiated by Sri Krsna- tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye, or as described in the prayers to the spiritual master, divya jnan hrde prokoshito. So, as we receive siksa and follow the instructions and absorb the knowledge, then it becomes diksa, with divya-jnana received at the soul level, as the essence.*

"*As we've discussed many times, initiation is a process. We connect with this process from the first time we encounter Srila Prabhupada's books, or hear the Maha Mantra in the line of the authentic parampara, etc. So it's a process, and at some point in the process we may say that initiation has actually taken place, just like we may say 'The milk is boiling,' though actually it's in the process of boiling. Then at some particular point the milk is actually at the boiling point, and that in itself can also be seen as just the beginning of the boiling process.*" (...)

Alex : (...) "*I have been in contact with Krsna Consciousness for 11 years now, and not that I am the yardstick by which others should be judged, but I feel like I am at that first level you describe. I have read some of Srila Prabhupada's books, heard some lectures, and I'm endeavoring to put things into practice, and that's where I'm at, where I want to be. I haven't had any mystical experience where knowledge is revealed in my heart. The first level that you describe, which you call siksa, that's what I want.*" (...)

Dhira Govinda dasa : "*I appreciate your personal sharing. For myself, I could replace '11 years' with '27 years', and express much the same as you have. Certainly I couldn't say that by adherence to Srila Prabhupada's siksa, the essence of divya-jnana has congealed in my heart and thus I am receiving diksa in the true sense. My adherence is sporadic and shallow. For myself I wouldn't say that I haven't had any mystical experience, or knowledge revealed in my heart. Whatever my lack of qualifications and sincerity, I believe that something, some spark, has landed deeply, due to the mercy of Srila Prabhupada and Krsna. Otherwise I don't think I'd be able to continue steadily reading Srila Prabhupada's books and chanting sixteen rounds per day, however inattentively that may be. It seems to me that the siksa and diksa processes work spontaneously, interactively, not necessarily linearly, though the general process is that siksa, following instructions, leads to diksa, genuine divya-jnana revealed and received at the level of the soul.*

"*The question raised is the point at which enough genuine divya-jnana, real diksa, is present so as to qualify for a formal initiation ceremony. The principles involving the distinctions and relationship between siksa and diksa are philosophical. The issue of what constitutes the precise 'boiling point' and therefore the point at which formal initiation is appropriate, may be more managerial in nature.*" (...)

We weave in and out. Between history and philosophy. This point in the letter might be a good place to present two quotes from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta:

"*The spiritual acarya is known as guru. He awards third birth to the living entities by* ***giving them initiation, in the form of imparting transcendental knowledge*** *. In this third birth a person engages in spiritual cultivation and attains freedom from material conceptions.*"
(Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, *Sajjana-toshani*, Vol. 19, Part 7/8, **emphasis** added)

"*If a person is not qualified to own something, how can he give it to others? Therefore the scriptures declare that one cannot worship Vishnu with mantras that are received from a nondevotee. One should give up the association of such nondevotees and* ***take initiation, in the form of transcendental knowledge*** *, from a Vaishnava spiritual master. Unless one gives up the bad association of persons who are averse to the Vaishnavas, he achieves no benefit.*"
(Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Brahmana & Vaisnava, *Vyavahara-kanda*, **emphasis** added)

This next section will be a sizeable chunk of quoted matter from Jagadananda. Again from the Audarya forum. Giving us an additional foundation. Helping us to see Srila Prabhupada, and our experience of him in our lives, in light of what Srila Bhaktisiddhanta introduced (re-introduced?). Even though this is a fairly long section, I think it's important to read it, in order to get a sense of the bigger picture. It may well be that arguments based on "the tradition", are basically a bluff, at least when presented in the context of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's line (**emphasis** added).

" ***Those in the diksha sampradayas will never accept the siksha sampradaya as bonafide*** *. They will always say, 'If you accept the siksha, then you will accept the siksha about diksha.' This will be very hard to overcome.*

" ***On the other hand, those in the Gaudiya Math must come to a proper understanding of the nature of Bhagavati diksha and all that it entails vis-a-vis the traditional Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya*** *.*

"*(1) That* ***Pancharatrika initiation transmitted without the Bhagavati diksha (or conversion experience) is useless*** *.*

"*(2) That Saraswati Thakur did indeed start a new sampradaya, the Brahma Madhva Gaudiya Saraswata sampradaya. Though it is new, it claims to be true to the original goals of Mahaprabhu, Rupa and Raghunath.*

"*(3) That Saraswati's ideas connected to Siddha pranali are intrinsically and deeply connected to this debate.*

"*(4) That Saraswati's ideas connected to Daiva Varnashram are intrinsically and deeply connected to this debate.*"

(...)

"*Read Brahman 0 Vaishnava, especially the middle chapter, and you will see what Saraswati Thakur means about Pancharatrika vidhi and Bhagavata vidhi.*

" ***In Saraswati's opinion, Bhagavati vidhi is primary, Pancharatrika is secondary*** *. If one has attained perfection on the Bhagavata path, there is no objection to initiating in the Pancharatrika mantras because* ***siddhi is not dependent on those mantras. They are only a tool for use in archan*** *.*"

(...)

"*Just as Saraswati rejected Brahminical status by birthright, he similarly rejected the idea of automatic accession to guru status by the same means.* ***This doctrine is one of the lynchpins of the Gaudiya Math and requires some detailed analysis*** *, especially since legitimacy in Gaudiya Vaishnavism (even in some cases, to the deviant lines) customarily required initation [sic] in a recognized line leading back to one of Chaitanya's associates.* ***Saraswati claimed to be initiated by Gaura Kishor Das Babaji, but contrary to custom, placed no importance on the line of disciplic succession in which his guru himself had taken initiation and never communicated this line to his own disciples*** *. Rather, he innovated something called the bhagavata-parampara. Furthermore, Saraswati clearly marked his separation from the rest of Gaudiya Vaishnavism by* ***giving initiation to Vaishnavas who had already received the mantra from a family guru (kula-guru) (re-initiation?)***

"*Though some point to the fact that Saraswati 'did not have high regard for Bipin Bihari Goswami' (his father's spiritual master), it seems that* ***his quarrel was not with any individual, by with the entire existing system.*** "

(...)

"Siddhanta Saraswati took initiation from Gaura Kishor Das Babaji in January, 1901. Legend has it that he had to ask his master three times before being accepted, as the humble hermit of lower caste background at first doubted the sincerity of the well-to-do scholar. There are differing ideas about the type of initiation Saraswati received: according to some biographers he was given mantra, for others it was a bhagavati diksha. ***Not surprisingly, bhagavati diksha is a concept unfamiliar to most people, even those within the Gaudiya Math, as the only kind of initiation current in Vaishnava circles has always been of the pancharatrika type*** *. The result is that many have wasted much time and effort unnecessarily trying to establish that Siddhanta Saraswati received pancharatrika-type mantra initiation from Gaura Kishor Das."*

(...)

"To summarize, it would appear that ***Saraswati went beyond simply criticism of the deterioration of morality in the sampradaya, but attacked some of its most cherished institutions*** *, which had been established as early as the Kheturi festival."*

(...)

" ***I have found three definitions of Bhagavati diksha*** *--one appears to be the transmission of the desire to serve (i.e., the conversion experience is the real initiation; or the 'planting of the bhakti-lata bija'), the second is the giving of the order to engage in Harinam. (Saraswati quotes the use of the word diksha in Haridas Thakur's speech to the prostitute from Chaitanya Charitamrita as support.) The third would be a wholehearted commitment to the teachings of the guru.*

"Saraswati's 'bhagavati diksha' in 1901 was followed shortly afterward by a committed attempt to perform a yajna of a billion Holy Names, so it seems to me that the second definition was the one Saraswati gave most importance to. This is also the one he gives in the 'Brahmana o Vaishnava' booklet."

(...)

" ***Saraswati claimed that the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition had been infected by a kind of ritualistic approach to religion, styled as vidhi-marga*** *, in opposition to the spontaneous devotional spirit of the bhagavata school of Vaishnavism that had existed at the origins of Chaitanya's movement."*

(...)

"We get an idea of what Siddhanta Saraswati meant by bhagavati diksha from his Brahmana 0 Vaishava essays where he cites the example of Hari Das Thakur, a Muslim convert, who likely never received pancharatrika initation, who says:

"I have been initiated into a vow to perform a great sacrifice by chanting the holy name a certain number of times every day. As long as the vow to chant is unfulfilled, I do not desire anything else. When I finish my chanting, my vow comes to an end (dIkSÀra vizrama)... I have vowed to chant ten million names in a month. I have taken this vow (diksha), but it is now nearing its end. (1)

"Saraswati continues, 'Unless one becomes qualified as a sacrificial Brahmin in the sacrifice of chanting the holy names, the name of Krishna does not manifest. Although Hari Das was not a seminal or Vedic Brahmin, he had attained the position of a qualified initiated (diksa) Brahmin.' *(2)* ***In other words, the simple commitment to regularly chant the holy names a certain number of times constitutes bhagavati diksha. Saraswati's own life bears this out, as not long after receiving this initiation, he took up a vow to chant a billion holy names in Mayapur.***

" Saraswati then goes on to distinguish between the Bhagavata and Pancharatra schools of Vaishnavism .

"According to his analysis, though there were originally many categories of Vaishnava, all but two of them had been lost. These were the Bhagavatas, whom he associates broadly with bhava-marga, or the path of emotion (raganuga bhakti), and the Pancharatras, who are associated with the ritualistic path of deity worship (vidhi-marga). The former followed the ecstatic path of chanting the Holy Name, the religious procedure meant for the Age of Kali, while the latter followed a path that had been prescribed in a previous age .

"Saraswati divides the four principal Vaishnava acharyas according to these two categories, assimilating Madhvacharya and Nimbaditya to Bhagavata-marga and Ramanujacharya and Vishnuswami to the latter. Nevertheless, to a greater or lesser extent, ***he admits there had been an intermingling of the two broad groups of Vaishnavas, with the elements of the Bhagavata culture based on hearing and chanting being accepted by the Pancharatras and the Bhagavatas accepting the need for deity worship on the lower stages of practice (kanistha-adhikara).***

" ***According to Saraswati, though Madhva strictly speaking followed the bhagavata-marga and Madhavendra Puri had accepted initiation in his line, neither Madhavendra nor Chaitanya accepted his doctrines, which had in time been infiltrated by pancharatrika ideas*** *. In fact, at a certain point Saraswati even equates Madhva's 'Tattva-vada' with Pancharatra. Saraswati cites Baladeva Vidyabhushan who, though considered by many to be wholly responsible for the Gaudiyas claims of connection to the Madhvas, pointed out four teachings in the Madhva line to be particularly unacceptable to Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Thus, Saraswati says, '* ***This Tattva—vada, or pancharatrika system, is not acceptable in the opinion of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Rather, He taught the path of bhagavata-marga*** *.'*

"Saraswati further goes on to associate everything that is connected to the vidhi-marga with Pancharatra, and all that is with the raga-marga to the Bhagavata path."

Another thing I found instructive was reading something that B.G. Narasimha wrote about the Jiva Institute. It also gives a taste of the philosophical conflicts that may have existed in Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's time, and how some of the same themes are still with us today. B.G. Narasimha writes (**emphasis** added):

"This time the attack against our parampara was coming from a young Indian scholar (once a member of ISKCON) who was representing the arguments and objections of the anti-party guru - an elderly Hindu scholar. ***As it turned out, in their opinion, not even Bhaktivinode Thakur is bona-fide, what then to speak of Saraswati Thakur and his followers*** *"*

By "anti-party" he means the Jiva Institute, and the followers of Haridas Sastri. B.G. Narasimha continues:

"A three hour special interview was first conducted by a third party and the discussions were tape-recorded. In a separate meeting the Brahmacharis sat in Satya Narayana's library at the Jiva Institute and listened to the three hour taped interview and carefully took notes."

B.G. Narasimha mentions there being 25 points of criticism by the Jiva Institute. Among them are criticisms like (**emphasis** added):

2) " ***Bhagavat-diksa does not exist, there is no logical meaning of bhagavata-diksa*** *.*

3) "We can understand Krishna and sastra only through proper diksa-parampara.

(...)

5) " ***Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada is a rebel against the parampara*** *. He disregarded all the proper diksa lines and attempted to establish his own concocted line by picking famous names from the Gaudiya history.*

(...)

9) "We must have an unbroken diksa line, because, through that channel not only are we doing service in this plane but also in the eternal plane . ***One must have a practical guide along the whole way*** *. comments added by divyapurusadas; this statement could be translated as follows; parampara links must come unbroken from a living guru to another living disciple who next becomes guru, so according to the caste goswamis (and some gaudiya math and gaura-govinda swami followers) vapu "physical presence" is superior to vani "instructions / spiritual knowledge"; a point totally dismissed by Srila Prabhupada) spiritual knowledge is spiritual; it transcendsmaterial time, place and circumstances, it does not depend on physical presence, material conditions or arrangements. People, instructors or books may be there or not, it cannot stop the dissemination of knowledge, spiritual knowledge can be revealed by somebody (or anybody; vartma pradarsaka guru) or by a tape machine or by looking at a video or by any material media, or from a*

book, (Krishna appears in His Arca –vigraha spiritual form, so spiritual knowledge is also an incarnation of God…so are Bhagavatam, vedas, audio-video tapes, and other paraphernalia)
even if none of theses are present or manifested, if the disciple is serious enough spiritual knowledge can come from within the heart (like for Brahma who had nothing and nobody around or like many rishis receive from the heart in the past and they wrote the vedas) or as in vedic times; no books available; only hearing from others (that is why knowledge got lost or misunderstood gradually after many generations). So hearing directly through ears (or tapes) or eyes (books- videos) is also earing, why are we still reading the Gita 5000 years after Krisna have gone, are we wasting time? Why are we still listening and reading Srila Prabhupada books, are they outdated or irrelevant?, is there anybody having a better cure and better nectar?
In the same vein if a physical presence is required for transcental knowledge why do we still worship the last Acarya by daily Guru Puja, is it a vain useless formality? Is Srila Prabhupada not present in his deity or books. To go further Why do we still worship the Deities if we will not derive any spiritual uplifment or inspiration/ devotion?
arcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-śuddhir
viṣṇor vā vaiṣṇavānāṁ kali-mala-mathane pāda-tīrthe 'mbu-buddhiḥ
śrī-viṣṇor nāmni mantre sakala-kaluṣa-he śabda-sāmānya-buddhir
viṣṇau sarveśvareśe tad-itara-sama-dhīr yasya vā nārakī saḥ
"One who thinks the Deity in the temple to be made of wood or stone, who thinks of the spiritual master in the disciplic succession as an ordinary man, who thinks the Vaiṣṇava in the Acyuta-gotra to belong to a certain caste or creed or who thinks of *caraṇāmṛta* or Ganges water as ordinary water is taken to be a resident of hell." (*Padma Purāṇa*)
To conclude this point we can say that people who claim we need physical presence actually believe THEY ARE THE ONLY BONAFIDE LIVING PHYSICAL REPRESENTATIVES by which others have to go through to get light, knowledge and devotion (like the smartas). Other past Acaryas they believe are gone for good (dead) so WE ARE THE LIVING LINK…THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY..if one thinks so then HE IS ALREADY DEAD, he is a spiritual hijacker in order to monopolise spirituality but he gets only material profits/ adoration/ distinction from the instututionalised sheeplike followers (see the Papacy/ roman mafia Catholic church history for their similar deviations till this very day.
Point 9 feels similar to an attitude one might encounter within the ISKCON organization, at least at the time when I was in contact with it. Point 2 reminds me of a COM post from 1999, by Bhaktarupa, (formerly available online, but no longer) where he states:
" *And your friend knows as well as everyone else that* ***there is no 'bhagavati diksa', so this is some obfuscation*** *. But there is a bhagavat parampara which consists of a general flow of teachings from one prominent personality to another. Just because we are following a bhagavat parampara does not mean that we are not also following a diksa parampara.* "
I think that this concept of "the tradition" seems to have a hold on many people's minds. The idea of a message being passed down from time immemorial, and making it's way down to us. **But what is it that is being handed down? Who is it that is handing it down to us?** What if all the talk about "the tradition" is not really accurate? What if people who talk about "the tradition" are actually (perhaps even unknowingly) using similar arguments to those used that were used against Srila Bhaktisiddhanta? What if Srila Prabhupada is not really innovating something new, but is simply handing down to us something that he received from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta?

It seems to me that a lot of people really don't think about this stuff, they simply repeat what somebody in the organization told them. And if what they were told isn't true, or doesn't really make sense, or doesn't really seem to gel with the overall body of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, for whatever reason, they don't seem bothered by it. They don't seem troubled by the internal contradictions.

I guess this may be where Sridhara Swami comes in. Srila Prabhupada had both positive and negative things to say about him. After Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, leaders in the ISKCON organization met with Sridhara. And he told them certain things, and they went on to do what they did ; upgrade themselves from GBC and ritviks as official-institutionnal diksa gurus with all the worship following it, because that is what the Gaudiya math did after Bhaktiddhanta disappearance, their GBC body voted for a self made acarya, who fell down almost immediatly, then they self appointed/selected others, to "share the cake". From what I remember, Sridhara even mentions *bhagavati diksa* in one of the transcripts of those talks, but seems to simply equate it to the Harinama initiation (ceremony). Now, these leaders' minds may well have already been fertile for what Sridhara was giving, but he still played his role in the whole drama.

I've heard the terms "*siksa parampara*" and "*siksa sampradaya*" used, during my time orbiting the ISKCON organization. And for better or worse, they have implanted themselves in my psyche. I'm curious as to whether Srila Prabhupada (or Srila Bhaktisiddhanta) ever actually used those terms. That is, I'm curious whether to hold onto those terms, or to purge them from myself. I know that Bhakti Vikasa, in the previously-quoted excerpt from his book, seems to have Srila Bhaktisiddhanta equating "*siksa parampara*" with *bhagavata-parampara*, but that may simply be Bhakti Vikasa's paraphrase, things as seen through his lens, rather than a direct quote from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. I'm curious if we have anything other than Sridhara's words for this concept of "*siksa parampara*".

What I mean is, what if our *parampara* really is a *diksa parampara*, simply that the meaning of *diksa* has been misrepresented? Below is a quote from a Bhaktarupa comment, originally from and old COM post that used to be available online, but which seems to have since been pulled. Anyway, I saved it onto a data stick. It's the same excerpt that I included at the opening of my letter. Here it is again:
"*A case can definitely be made that our Srila Prabhupada stressed siksa. As a matter of fact, Sivarama Maharaja in his recent book not only says that, but also concludes that Srila Prabhupada considered diksa to be simply another kind of siksa. This is certainly creating lots of ammo for both the ritvik and the Gaura-nagari camps.*"
I'm aware of Sivarama's book, but after having listened to his *guru-tattva* lecture tape series, years ago, when I was still in contact with the ISKCON organization, I never felt inspired to really dig any deeper in his stuff. More recently, I've been toying with the idea of buying the book, in hopes that maybe he presents quotes from Srila Prabhupada that I haven't yet seen, that further reinforce the "*diksa is siksa*" idea.
As far as I can tell, all of this stuff seems to point to *siksa* and *diksa* as possibly being two stages along a continuum. This gets kind of tricky as it posits "*diksa*" as both a continuum, and a stage along that same continuum.

I put the milk on the heating element, and somebody asks me what I'm doing. "*Boiling milk*", I reply.

But the milk might not yet have actually reached its boiling point. So it's not really boiling, is it? Not yet anyway. But the "boiling process", for lack of a snazzier jargon, has begun.

Reading a book could be seen as taking in sensory impressions through the external senses, taking them within, and this may still be well within the "*siksa*" range of the *diksa* continuum.

The *siksa*/*diksa* distinction may be similar in some ways to the *jnana*/*vijnana* distinction. With *diksa* being an internal

realization/revelation of what was previously taken into the self through *siksa*. *Divya jnan hrde prokoshito*. Maybe something like: *tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye*.

I'd lean towards seeing Srila Bhaktisiddhanta as reviving something primordial, that had perhaps become distorted over time, rather than him inventing something new. I mean this in the sense of him perhaps speaking out against a "tradition" that may have by then become degraded. But who really knows? In any case, I trust Srila Bhaktisiddhanta 's judgment in preserving the essence of the thing. And I assume that we then receive that same essence from Srila Prabhupada.

To get back to the milk analogy, I put milk on the stove, on a hot element. Someone asks me what I'm doing and I reply that I am boiling some milk. **But really, the milk is not yet boiling**. The boiling process has begun, but the boiling temperature has not yet been reached. This might be seen as the *siksa* stage of the continuum. The heat is acting on the milk like the *siksa* is acting on the *jiva*. When the milk actually begins to boil, this might be said to be the beginning of *diksa* in the true sense. Here transcendental knowledge is being revealed in the heart, not simply taken in through the external senses, as *siksa*. Something is changing in the *jiva*, like the milk is changing when it starts to boil.

Well, in a sense the *jiva* is changeless, so it's not actually changing, but it's becoming **more fully manifest**, peeking out more and more from behind its material coverings.

It's not always easy to talk about this, because *diksa* is so often spoken about in a superficial way, similar to how you can "convert" to whatever religion, thought without necessarily having any serious internal transformation. Simply an external rite of passage.

I used to be fairly neutral to Sridhara, respectful from a distance, though I am less and less inclined to see him in that way now. I'm open to the possibility that Sridhara may have played an important role in the breakdown of the GM, and even perhaps in the distortion of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's legacy, and there are quotes from Srila Prabhupada that seem to me to be consistent with that. But that's a big topic, and a controversial one.

Certainly Srila Prabhupada was kind to Sridhara, glorified his good qualities, encouraged him, worked with him, acknowledged their shared history and their friendship, but I think he nonetheless saw Sridhara for who he was. If you look at the context of the letter where Srila Prabhupada calls Sridhara the "best of the lot", there is a section where Srila Prabhupada says: "*You are right about Sridhara Maharaja's genuineness*."

Often this is taken to mean something like: "*Yes, you are right that Sridhar is genuine*".

But if you look at the logical flow of the letter, and if you read the testimony of the person to whom Srila Prabhupada was writing, it seems to be something different.

From what I understand, from what I've read, the person to whom Srila Prabhupada was writing was narrating an event that took place at Sridhara's *matha*. An even that made Sridhara look bad, make him look not genuine. This is what Srila Prabhupada seems to be referring to.

In the sense of: yes, you are right about Sridhara's genuineness (that is, his lack of it). "*But in my opinion he is the best of the lot. He is my old friend, at least he executes the regulative principles of devotional service*." It's faint praise.

I think that this conflict over the meaning of initiation goes at least as far back as the days of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta vs the caste *goswamis* and *babajis*. It's not something that originated with the GBC vs "the *ritviks*".

I think that Sridhara Swami may well have misunderstood, and/or misrepresented Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's concept of *bhagavati-diksa*, including in his meetings with ISKCON org leaders, after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance pastime. And this aspect of the drama may potentially tie my letter in with some of the work that you're so courageously doing.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta seems to contrast *bhagavati-diksa* with *pancharatrika-diksa*, where I would understand *pancharatrika-diksa* to be the standard external formalities associated with the initiation process: fire, bananas, beads, mantras, an "unbroken lineage", etc.

It seems that *bhagavati diksa* is something internal, and might have various components. Supposedly, at times, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta seems to speak about it as a vow taken to chant a certain volume of japa, as Srila Haridas Thakura did, though being a Muslim he likely had not undergone the ritualistic formalities. Other times it seems, in Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's writings, that *bhagavati-diksa* might be seen as some kind of primordial conversion experience, separate from the rituals.

Taking the big picture, taking the quotes from both Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, it seems to me that *bhagavati-diksa* might well encompass the entire *diksa* process, where *diksa* is seen as the transmission of *divya-jnana*.

And not only *divya-jnana* received through the external senses, like the eyes and ears, but ultimately *divya-jnana* awakened from within, like *divya-jnana hrde prokasito*. Seeds taken in through the eyes and ears, but eventually landing in the soil of the heart and growing and blossoming there. An internal transformation. Leading to a deep commitment.

I'm not sure if Jagadananda fully grasps all aspects of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's conception of *bhagavati-diksa*, but I think he has important pieces of the puzzle.

There are a number of articles that helped me to get increased clarity on this whole topic. I want to thank Harakumara and Hasti Gopala for the Sun articles that they wrote, and which impacted me. Hasti Gopala's was beautiful in its simplicity. I want to thank Jalakara for " The Sons of the Son: The Breakup of the Gaudiya Matha ". More recently I read Dusyanta's "Clarification and Statement to Date", with its emphasis on the principle of transcendental sound as opposed to the "ceremonial-*diksa*" formality. I also feel grateful for a number of things that I've read from Mahesh Raja, on the topic of what constitutes actual *diksa*. I maintain gratitude to Dhira Govinda for his PL writings. And I want to thank George A. Smith. An article of his first inspired me to compile what you're reading now. In George's "Formal Initiation is a Formality" we read:
"*In response to Rasaprema's conviction that his interpretation of the word 'initiation' as referring to the formal ceremony commonly referred to as dika [sic] is the correct one, and that therefore everyone must undergo this formal rite in order to receive spiritual*

initiation, the Rtviks have responded in agreement, only differing in minor details of how it should be conducted within ISKCON. I have responded differently than the Rtviks, with the counterclaim that what Rasaprema believes to be an 'essential' element of Vaisnava Sadhana that is applicable to all times, places and circumstances is not, and that it is only a mere formality."
Let's now go to some transcribed text from Jagadananda's article in the book " The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant " (**emphasis** added):
"*Most Bengali Gaudiya Math authors seem to favor the term bhagavati diksa*."
(...)
"*...where it is translated as 'esoteric initiation into Bhagavata Dharma'*."
(...)
"*It may be that Saraswati was in fact reverting to a more primordial concept of initiation as a genuine rebirth, or conversion,* ***rather than a ritual formality of any kind.*** "
Another excerpt, from a different section of the same book article (**emphasis** added):
" ***The bhagavata parampara idea had never stopped Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati from initiating disciples according to a Pancaratrika model*** *. On the other hand, his ideas about unconventional leadership may have prevented him from designating a successor,* ***in the expectation that a true spiritual leader would emerge from the ranks of his disciples.*** "
Jagadananda's article also quotes from a text by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, where Srila Bhaktisiddhanta states (**emphasis** added):
"*Descendents of the Gaudiya Vaishnava acharyas became more or less attached to the path of archan, like the followers of the Pancaratras, and spread subordination to Sriman Mahaprabhu [Chaitanya],* ***sometimes in its pure form, but more often in a perverted form*** ."
(...)
"*While preaching the pure path of bhava [spontaneous love of God] explained in the Srimad Bhagavatam, Sriman Mahaprabhu distinguished it from mundane formalities, but* ***in due course of time His teachings have become distorted into a branch of the Pancaratrika system*** *. This, however, is not the purpose of Sriman Mahaprabhu's pure preaching*."
One more thing comes to mind, as we get closer to the end of this letter. On February 5th, 2010, Puranjana posted a letter on his Myspace blog from someone identified only as: ******** Dasi. Here's what she wrote:
"*I might get pelted for this. Srila Narayana Maharaj is my Guru who gave me Harinam initiation, about 3 years after I wandered about in Iskcon. But in my heart and soul, where great intense devotion and love exists, which is inexplicably far deeper than for my own Guru, lives Srila Prabhupad. And I never met him, nor heard him. But I do know through experience he is alive. Very much alive*."
Years ago, I read a short article entitled " Guru and Initiation: an answer for our time ". It impacted me and inspired further research, chanting, and introspection. The article quotes from a lecture labeled as being from May 21st, 1968. One time I even mentioned a quote from that lecture in response to an IRM text. I was informed that no such lecture appears in the Vedabase. In an article on the IRM page, someone writes :
"*The 'lecture excerpt from 5/21/68' DOES NOT EXIST. At least not on the Vedabase. Therefore unless 'Alex' possesses access to a lecture which no one else has seen, his argument here is fabricated. And if he does possess access to this lecture, let him please produce the tape for us to check this quote. Thank you*."
After sharing an earlier version of this letter/article with some people via email, someone kindly responded, informing me that the lecture from May 21st, 1968, was recently transcribed and would be included in the next version of the Vedabase (**emphasis** added):
" ***Initation, initation does not mean that it is a ceremony and it is finished. No, it is progressing, it is progressing just like education*** *. It is progressing, so in the first beginning, is the ceto-darpana-marjanam (Antya 20.12). Just to cleanse oneself from the understanding of material identification, hare krsna hare krsna, so at least for one year chanting regularly. Observing the rules and regulations one comes to the platform of ..spiritual platform and then another initiation this is called diksa. That is also diksa, that is the first process.* ***This diksa second process is not very essential the essential is to chant.*** " (C-030__680521IN-BOS)
The transcriber was even kind enough to send me an mp3 of the lecture.
There's probably so much more to be researched, learned, refined, understood, clarified, realized and absorbed. And I welcome that, but this letter has already gotten quite long. But before we part ways I wanted to leave you with one last quote:
"*. . . There was one doubt that was plaguing me . . .* ***I had always been taught when I was first joining that the parampara is like a link, a chain. If you don't have the perfect link, if you are not initiated- You really cannot go back to Godhead*** *. . . I presented this question to Prabhupada. I followed Srila Prabhupada from Rupa Gosvami's Samadhi back into the courtyard, and just before Srila Prabhupada took the steps, in the courtyard, I said 'We are distributing so many books but if people who read them aren't initiated then they can't go back to Godhead.' And Prabhupada turned and looked at me right in the eyes and he said '* ***Just by reading my books they are initiated.***'
"
(Memories of Srila Prabhupada, Tape #31, Vaikunthanatha speaking about Srila Prabhupada in Vrndavana in 1972, **emphasis** added)
The reality underneath all the fog is that Srila Prabhupada is available. He is available to be one's primary source of transcendental knowledge, and consequently one's point of absolute surrender. The details related to the initiation ceremony do not change that reality.
I thank you for reading thus far, and as always, I wish you all the best.
Alex

WHAT NEED IS THERE TO TAKE DISCIPLES; (from http://prabhupadavision.com/)

Kṛṣṇacandra Dāsa – Vṛndāvan: The false doctrine of the Rubberstamped Guru / Ācārya and the Rubberstamped ṛtvik Guru has no śāstric support or mandate by Śrīla Prabhupāda to show that they are bona fide systems of initiation. The Rubberstamped guru system was a fabrication of the eleven GBC men who Śrīla Prabhupāda trusted his movement to manage, who went on to betray him. The GBC, to this day, are promoting, enforcing and applying this very same heretical system to appoint initiating gurus who take disciples for their own instead of using the system that Śrīla Prabhupāda mandated in the July 9th document.
The ṛtvik system is a fallacious response to this heretical system which has gained popularity as it seemingly offers a system that could take the place of the heretical Rubberstamped system of the errant GBC, however, it lacks any mandate from Śrīla Prabhupāda or basis in śāstra.
The failure of these systems to comply with the teaching and mandates of Śrīla Prabhupāda can leave one bewildered as to what system Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted for his Society?

Self Manifested Dīkṣā Guru

One position is that a śuddha bhakta disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda or perhaps another nitya siddha will manifest, and begin to initiate new devotees and that up until that time all prospective devotees need to take śikṣā association of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his more advanced disciples.

Kaniṣṭha or Madhyama Dīkṣā Guru

The other argument would be that kaniṣṭha or madhyama adhikāri disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would be able, according to their inclination to be a dīkṣā guru, or by the desire of a prospective disciple, begin to take disciples after being approved by the GBC. That

this would be a personal choice of both guru and/or disciple, however, by its very nature will mean that the disciple has not been properly trained to discriminate between a neophyte aspiring Vaiṣṇava and a nitya siddha Vaiṣṇava.
Any new devotee coming to ISKCON should be given instruction to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda as the sole dīkṣā guru and in doing so would receive divya jñāna from him directly as was the case before the 11 GBC / ṛtvik representatives supplanted Śrīla Prabhupāda as the sole dīkṣā guru and spiritual and managerial authority of ISKCON and appointed themselves in his place.
What those original ṛtvik representatives did was to effectively sever the link between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his role in ISKCON and appoint themselves in both spiritual (as initiating spiritual masters) and managerial positions, as GBC members.
With Śrīla Prabhupāda effectively out of the way they set about inculcating their heretical and offensive authority into the inner core functioning of Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON.
By doing so they completely ignored that legal fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda established himself as the "supreme power" of his ISKCON Society as delineated below. The errant GBC purposefully changed the meaning of "Ultimate Managerial Authority" from one of managing Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON to one where they now call the shots on both managerial and spiritual matters and they claim that this now gives them "carte blanche" authority to change whatever they deem fit with Śrīla Prabhupāda's Society and have, to all extents and purposes, made Śrīla Prabhupāda redundant.
He shall be the supreme power with respect to all matters of the Society, and that status shall not be occupied by or shared with any other individual, either during his lifetime, OR AFTER HIS DEATH." (Certificate of Incorporation: Jan 12 1976)
The GBC and Rubberstamped Gurus have been trying their level best to supplant and change Śrīla Prabhupāda's authority ever since he entered into Samādhi. Now Śrīla Prabhupāda is only to be considered as a preeminent śikṣā guru and the Rubberstamped gurus are now the dīkṣā gurus even though their actual spiritual status is unquantifiable and unqualifiable by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava standards and only by the standard that the errant GBC have established.
This is the real history of Post Samādhi ISKCON.
The GBC's standard that; an aspiring Vaiṣṇava – is the new standard to qualify as a dīkṣā guru, or initiating spiritual master – ultimately negates Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings on accepting a bona fide spiritual master and that a Vaiṣṇava of the highest order is necessary in order to advance in one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
They have intentionally lowered the standard to allow for the fact that their own level of realization rests on memory recall and their devotional 'career' and not on actual spiritual realization and surrender to Śrī Guru. The litmus test on their level of realizations is the extraordinary high rate of poor saddhana and falldown of their voted in members.
However, this proposition that a kaniṣṭha or madhyama adhikārī aspiring Vaiṣṇava may perform the role of dīkṣā guru or initiating spiritual master is easily understood to be defunct by the undeniable fact that during Śrīla Prabhupāda's manifest līlā he had many thousands of loyal and dedicated disciples who loved him dearly and engaged in the Saṅkīrtana yajña with full gusto and dedication, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not name any one of them, whether they be kaniṣṭha, madhyama or uttama, to perform this role after he entered into Samādhi nor did he mandate a process in which one could do so after his physical departure. To think that we can change such a vital aspect of the role and function of a dīkṣā guru or initiating spiritual master simply because we want to be a guru is possibly the most heinous form of Vaiṣṇava aparādha or Guru aparādha one can commit.

Śrīla Prabhupāda – The Senior Most Vaiṣṇava

The other position is that Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Ācārya established a system that has been delineated in the July 9th Document to be used in his absence. That Śrīla Prabhupāda is the initiating guru and senior most Vaiṣṇava and that his representatives act under the mandate given in the July 9th document to maintain (manage) the initiation process as it was done in Śrīla Prabhupāda's absence in his manifest līlā.
It is beyond doubt that disciples of his, both now and in the future, will become pure and the possibility that Kṛṣṇa will send another nitya siddha to help us, is a distinct and real possibility. However, the idea that the Lord will send another Ācārya like Śrīla Prabhupāda is like receiving a post dated cheque with regards to the initiation process.

The Ācārya Knows What Is To Be Done

Whether or not Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples become śuddha bhaktas or whether we accept the 'post dated cheque/ theory of Kṛṣṇa sending another Ācārya close on the heels of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the fact remains that it is more than likely they would also do the same thing as Śrīla Prabhupāda and leave an initiation system for the future, otherwise their mission would never be complete.
A complete mission would be to establish a perpetual initiation system for the fallen conditioned souls of the Kali-yuga otherwise the pandemonium that occurred after Śrīla Prabhupāda passed would occur again and again. History would repeat itself in a never ending misery of envious jīva baddhas full of kāma and lobha, lusting and coveting Śrīla Prabhupāda's divine position as the sole dīkṣā guru of ISKCON.
As an Ācārya, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Mahārāja, Śrīla Prabhupāda's dīkṣā guru, did not leave a system nor did he appoint any one of his disciples, no matter what adhikārī they were, as initiating gurus or Ācāryas and his disciples did the same thing as the original eleven have done in ISKCON. Also as an Ācārya and śuddha bhakta, Śrīla Prabhupāda never named a successor nor did he make an announcement giving his ISKCON society a post dated cheque that we must wait until a śuddha bhakta is revealed before the initiation process can begin again.
In other words he did not leave his life and soul's mission hanging… He would never have allowed history, a history that he was very much aware of and a part of, to repeat itself.
If Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted devotees to wait until another pure devotee manifested or for one of his direct disciples to become pure or he wanted that any of his kaniṣṭha and madhyama adhikārī disciples could begin to initiate in his absence, then he would have pounded this process into his lectures, his official documents and his books; like Śrīla Prabhupāda did with every single vital aspect of his teachings, but he never did.
The July 9th Document is the final official order with regards to the initiation process and if it had been allowed to be in place since his departure, as with the Direction of Management, the ISKCON that we are serving would be an entirely different Society than the dysfunctional liberal / capitalistic corporate society that we have today.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Is Everything We Need

The living guru / rubberstamped guru / ṛtvik guru – heretical ideologies have ruined our society and destroyed devotees' devotional lives for well over three decades. We must cast them off from our consciousness like an anartha and learn to take full unalloyed shelter of His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda and no other.
Following is a very nice example in a video from The Āchārya Series – Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.14.44 (Disk 19), in which we can see for ourselves as Śrīla Prabhupāda shows how he will live on in the mediums that he has left for us.
Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Class Canto 1 Chapter 14 Text 44 New York
Without Kṛṣṇa there is no other existence. That the devotee can see. Therefore, whenever he see stone even, he sees Kṛṣṇa. Here the atheist will say that you are worshipping stone. But they are not worshipping stone, they're worshipping Kṛṣṇa. Because they know that there is no, nothing else except Kṛṣṇa.
Premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena. That state we have to arrive. How you can say stone is not Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa says you have to understand Kṛṣṇa as Kṛṣṇa says. But Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad Gītā, "bhūmir āpo nalo vayuj kham mano buddhir eva ca bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā" They are Mine. Just like I am speaking and it is being recorded, and we'll replay it, the same sound will come and you'll know that here is our spiritual master. But I'm not there, the sound is now different from me. Bhinnā means separated. But the, as soon as

the record is played, everyone will know here is Bhaktivendanta Swami. If you know, so that requires education… [break] That Kṛṣṇa. So ye yathā mām the more you engage yourself in Kṛṣṇa's service, the more you can realize Kṛṣṇa.
Srimad Bhagavatam 1.14.44 from Prabhupada Vision on Vimeo.
This is a very important point that Śrīla Prabhupāda is making.
"and we'll replay it, the same sound will come and you'll know that here is our spiritual master"
Śrīla Prabhupāda then goes on to explain.
"But then as soon as the record is played, everyone will know here is Bhaktivedanta Swami."
The Devotee Bhāgavata Does Not Die
This is not very difficult to understand. The Books that he tirelessly wrote in which he gave himself to us in the form of the word; the tapes that we have so we can listen to him speak to us; the videos and pictures of him that we have to see him and hear his voice in order for us to learn from him – all of them directly represent him. In this way they are non-different from him.
The only occasion that they differ is when we cast our mundane understanding on His Divine Grace and believe that His Divine Grace is dead and gone so he cannot impart divya jñāna… That Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot impart divya jñāna through his purports or his spoken or written word? That Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, lectures and tapes were only empowered when he was alive? Does this go up to point when His Divine Grace was manifest, regarding his geographic positional appearances, say, when he left in a car or was across the other side of the country or world? Or even when he left the room…?
This idea can even stretch to the idea that perhaps even Kṛṣṇa Himself cannot impart divya jñāna in His form as the Book Bhāgavata and that He only functions to impart divya jñāna if His message is delivered by a living nitya siddha guru. That would make private reading or discussion groups on Kṛṣṇa kathā, without the presence of a śuddha bhakta, more or less futile.
Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the nitya siddha devotee, established ISKCON in order for the fallen conditioned souls to return back to Godhead. He has left himself as Devotee Bhāgavata in the form of his books, tapes, videos, lectures, conversations and his mūrti. Kṛṣṇa has left Himself in the form of His Mūrtis and as the Book Bhāgavata. Combined they represent divya jñāna. Śrīla Prabhupāda as the external manifestation of caitya guru represents divya jñāna to deliver us.
"So there is nothing to be said new. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now you try to understand it and continue your endeavour. Whether I am present or not present it doesn't matter." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, arrival conversation, May 17th, 1977, Vṛndāvan)
Śrīla Prabhupāda's books contain both the Lord as the Book Bhāgavata and Śrīla Prabhupāda himself as the devotee Bhāgavata and in these pages one can find divya jñānam or transcendental/divine knowledge which is all that we require in order to attain vijñānam, or realized knowledge, by practicing the instructions given therein.
"The devotee Bhāgavata is a direct representative of Bhagavān, the Personality of Godhead. So by pleasing the devotee Bhāgavata one can receive the benefit of the Book Bhāgavata." [Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Canto 1: Chapter Two, Text 18]
The incongruous idea that Śrīla Prabhupāda is dead and so there is no way in which anyone can obtain divya jñānam from him is explained below:
Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda when you're not present with us, how is it possible to receive instructions? For example in questions that may arise…
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Well the questions are answ…answers are there in my books.
(Śrīla Prabhupāda, morning walk, Los Angeles, 13/5/73)
Śrīla Prabhupāda gives us everything we require in order to carry on without his physical presence. We have no need of seeking out a living dīkṣā guru to impart divya jñānam, as below Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that all our questions will be answered if we make a careful study of his books.
"So utilize whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be answered." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, letter to Upendra, 7/1/76)
The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Continues By Śikṣā .
We on the other hand can, if we are desirous, represent the Lord and our spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda in the role of a śikṣā guru. When we do, the dīkṣā guru and the śikṣā guru are considered to be one in the way of delivering divya jñāna to other fallen conditioned souls. The perfection of one's life is to please the spiritual master and in that way please Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is only after pleasing the Lord that He will reveal Himself to us in due course of time.
We please the Lord by pleasing His ambassador, His nitya siddha devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda; who was sent by the Lord Himself for the specific purpose of providing us with not only divya jñāna but to teach us how to understand such high subject matter and to establish a fool proof system and society (House) in order to enable us to render devotional service to the Lord by adhering to the instructions and mandates that he has provided for us to follow. That is if, we in fact believe this…
Divyapurusa notes; as demonstrated above the Guru Parampara line is not primarily based on the initiation ceremony, but on real Diksa (divya-jnana) which is given by the instructing parampara guru(s) mostly and by the conclusion of the bonafide Acaryas (not given by the smartas, jnanis and karma-kandiyas). Now as far as the Diksa guru is concerned, He must be a Mahabhagavad liberated soul and must be the last link in the chain of disciplic succession, even if there is nobody physically present to fill that gap-position, the last fully realized (sidha) Acarya on the bhava platform is the only last link through which we can get access to the all other previous Acaryas (servant of the servant), we cannot jump over Prabhupada to access the conclusion of the parampa and the acaryas (even from other sampradayas, they all have the same conclusion, although other sampradayas focuss generally more on pancaratrik viddhi because they precede the advent of Lord Caitanya). Now if somebody (or a group of individuals) pretend to be the last link and said we have to go trough him only to get initiation or divya-jnana in order to access the nectar from the parampara, we should take it for granted he is an imposter or pretender who actually block us the access to Vaikunta/ Krishnaloka, such imposter or offender cannot be even a siksa instructing guru (what to speak of being a Diksa initiating guru) because guru means transparent via-medium, unstained devotee through whom all the spiritual world can be seen. Such pretender, imperfect soul, however advanced he may be is still like stained glasses; **conclusion;** do not look for cheap or dark colored glasses, get a real pair, go to a bonafide optitian in the parampara, or ask other bonafide siksa gurus (any sincere devotee who have no personal ambitions) where is the proper shop to get divya-jnana, they will tell you, Srila Prabhupada is still the sole agent for pure glasses through his books, classes..etc... When you get liberated in Krishnaloka then you will see the spiritual world without glasses or help.
Was Śrīla Prabhupāda A Nitya Baddha Devotee.
Do we in fact believe that Śrīla Prabhupāda was sent by Kṛṣṇa Himself or was he, like us, simply a nitya baddha jīva, who, by performing rāgānugā saddhana bhakti and study of the śāstra, became either a madhyama or uttama adhikārī devotee who – appointed himself as a dīkṣā guru and began to take disciples and went on to establish a worldwide organization that he called ISKCON.
Now that he is dead and gone, we have open slather to take his place as initiating spiritual masters, dīkṣā gurus, and establish our own independent programs to promote ourselves as bona fide spiritual masters, begin taking our own disciples and promoting our own books, programs and projects independent of mother ISKCON.
All this; while ISKCON as an institution rots in spiritual / financial bankruptcy and corporate bureaucratic decay while the independent Guru Franchises expand exponentially like an unchecked viral infection dividing up Śrīla Prabhupāda's international Vaiṣṇava Society.

However if we do in fact believe that Śrīla Prabhupāda is a shaktyavesa avatar who was sent by Kṛṣṇa to continue the paramparā then who are we to challenged his authority or to interpret his instructions or change his teachings and books? Who are we to imitate his role and function and put ourselves in his stead and begin to take disciples in his presence?
Who are we to keep the disciples and the money; the resources; and properties gained via the use of his good name, everything he has taught us and his beloved ISKCON society, to increase our personal wealth fame and worship?
The idea that has been acculturated into our movement is the idea that we need to act like Śrīla Prabhupāda and make disciples of our own in order to be seen as advanced Vaiṣṇavas and Kṛṣṇa conscious and in doing so we miss the point of our own salvation. Śrīla Prabhupāda is more than capable of making disciples and imparting divya jñāna.

The Rubberstamped Guru's Delusions Of Grandeur

The most ironic belief, that lies purposefully unchecked by the so called Rubberstamped Gurus, is held by their disciples who believe that their gurus are also nitya siddha devotees sent by Lord Kṛṣṇa to aid Śrīla Prabhupāda in his mission. The discreet imagining of their neophyte disciples is not only left unchecked, it is many times promoted by their imitating dīkṣā guru, who liberally uses various posturing, expressive facial contortions and declarations of visions and dreams depicting their actualized visions of Kṛṣṇa līlā serves to encourage this neophyte mentality.

Terminology Misunderstandings And Misdirection

The problem is a misunderstanding of terms. Spiritual Master, Ācārya, dīkṣā guru, śikṣā guru are terms that are largely misunderstood within our movement. A father is a spiritual master but that does not mean that the father can impart divya jñāna if he has only jñāna. Should he be able to recall śāstra in the form of Bhāgavata Dharma he is considered a śikṣā guru.

The Spiritual Master

The spiritual master is a term to describe one who imparts knowledge, jñāna up to the point of and including divya jñāna. A śikṣā guru may or may not have realized spiritual knowledge or is in the state of bhava or prema but is able to impart divya jñāna after taking shelter and serving a pure devotee of the Lord or in other words a dīkṣā guru, and in so doing teaches others to become Kṛṣṇa conscious by following the orders of the dīkṣā guru spiritual master.

The Ācārya

The Ācārya is one who teaches by example, according to his level of consciousness. In the highest sense this is an empowered nitya siddha who has descended in the paramparā in order to teach, by his example, the path back to Godhead, Bhāgavata dharma in the role of dīkṣā guru. They are a śuddha bhakta who has divine or transcendental knowledge and imparts it to seekers of the absolute truth because he has himself seen the absolute truth.

The Liberated Devotee

There are nitya siddha devotees on earth who do not impart this knowledge and/or take disciples and who are in the process of liberating themselves and may be on the platform of bhava or prema, however, they are only desirous of the obtainment of liberation from material bondage in order to be with Kṛṣṇa, while others are given the role of an Ācārya by the Lord and who engages in the preaching mission of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Saṅkīrtana Movement; who for us is His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Mission Continued By Śikṣā Gurus

There is another consideration when attempting to understand the paramparā system. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the most recent Ācārya to be manifest on earth in the kali-yuga history of mankind. His role has only just begun and will take time to be properly and fully understood and manifest to us. **The paramparā system is continued by the śikṣā process and does not require a living dīkṣā guru at all times in order to continue the process of paramparā. Our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava system is propagated by the śikṣā process and not necessarily by the process of dīkṣā.**
This is made obvious by the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda left his books and tapes etc to be able to assist in the process of the obtainment of divya jñāna, along with his many sincere disciples who, acting as śikṣā guru, distribute his teachings in the form of his books and follow his instructions and assist in creating an environment both practical and spiritual that is conducive to the performance of rāgānugā saddhana bhakti.

Why Do We Desire The Responsibility of Disciples

The other mentality, that we need to have disciples no matter what level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness we may be at, also needs to be rejected as the śuddha bhakta His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda is present. There is the idea in our society that if someone wants to be guru then why stop them? Or let the prospective disciple decide if they want to take spiritual initiation from someone of their choice therefore if people are requesting to be made a disciple of a particular person then no one should interfere with this process.
This is a rather simplistic understanding. This is not a mundane career or pseudo religious process we are involved in, this is a process that is coming from the Supreme Lord Himself and not something that can be negotiated. Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us the way back to Godhead and all we "need" to do is do just that. Treat this material world as a toilet, do our business and get out.

If The Śuddha Bhakta Is Present Why Settle For Second Best

The dīkṣā guru gives the highest understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Bhāgavata Dharma, and all the Ācāryas agree that one must seek a guru who is on the highest standing. Yet if necessary one may take a guru of a lower spiritual realization however if the spiritual master is not in the state of bhava or prema then the disciple cannot proceed further than the level of consciousness of the spiritual master.
Śrīla Prabhupāda is present and so he is offering himself as that personality who is on the highest platform to take shelter of. There is no possibility of a higher personality or a more connected nitya siddha – the sincere śikṣā guru / spiritual master need only assist others to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and help each other to understand his teachings and instructions found in his books.
There is no need to pose as a dīkṣā guru and repeat what Śrīla Prabhupāda has given or has accomplished in establishing his ISKCON Society and begin to make one's own disciples. The system that Śrīla Prabhupāda has left behind in the July 9th Document more than amply provides for a perfect system to officialise the initiation process.
It must be understood that if Śrīla Prabhupāda had wanted that the role of an initiating spiritual master can be occupied by devotees of lesser standing, such as kaniṣṭha or madhyama adhikārī; he would have nominated one of his more advanced disciples to act as his successor or in the role of dīkṣā guru. BUT HE DIDN'T. We simply have to accept this and move on. We cannot try and manipulate our way around this undeniable fact and historic event.
The one who gives divya jñāna and takes disciples must be a śuddha bhakta of the Lord. He must have what he is giving. To negotiate this process down to a 'pointing the way' to the śuddha bhakta or to instruct a person on how to engage in the devotional process by referring to, or repeating the words of, the Book Bhāgavata or the Devotee Bhāgavata, is the activity of a śikṣā guru, not an initiating spiritual master / dīkṣā guru.

The Lord Is Pleased When We Please The Ācārya

The only way to please the Lord is to follow the instructions of the nitya siddha Ācārya who has come in the disciplic succession, there is no other way. Even if one is an erudite scholar possessing full remembrance of the śāstric injunctions, if they do not please the Ācārya then they will never be able to please the Lord.
The simple rule of thumb is to please the devotees by pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda by understanding his teachings and following his instructions and engaging one's life in doing the duties that Śrīla Prabhupāda has prescribed and if we are very fortunate and sincere then by His own sweet will, the Lord will reveal Himself to us.

The uttama adhikārī, who has had darśana of the Lord, is only interested in the further obtainment of Kṛṣṇa prema, however, if due to the will of the Lord, he is needed to preach, then he comes down to the madhyama platform in order to preach, otherwise he is steeped in Kṛṣṇa prema and cares little for anything else.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission is to give the fallen conditioned souls, baddha jīvas of the Kali yuga, the opportunity to go back to Godhead. So we need to listen to that message, we need to follow the instructions and duties that he has given us and do our business here and get back to Kṛṣṇa.

To Take Disciples When One Is Unqualified Is Cheating

The fact that the rubberstamped heretical gurus of ISKCON are operating their own independent Guru Franchise businesses within the framework of Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON Society is the most traitorous form of Guru aparādha and must be stopped immediately.

There is nothing stopping a person or aspiring Vaiṣṇava, or a Vaiṣṇava in fact, from establishing their own independent movement and initiating their own disciples and attempting to create a 'better' or different Society. But in the wake of Śrīla Prabhupāda surely this idea is folly?

The Lord has sanctioned Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON and not the FISKCON of the GBC, Rubberstamped Guru Franchise Businesses or the ṛtvik Gurus and why would one think that the Lord would sanction another separate endeavour as an affiliate of ISKCON?

Conclusion

The only feasible and honourable solution would be to cleanse the ISKCON that has been established by His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda by eradicating the bogus and heretical ideologies that have been acculturated into our Vaiṣṇava Society by greedy, ambitious and ignorant devotees who have only served to serve themselves by paying lips service to and by using the pure devotee and dīkṣā guru of ISKCON His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda as a launch pad for their independent business endeavours.

To not follow the orders of the Spiritual Master / Ācārya / dīkṣā guru is nothing less than Vaiṣṇava aparādha.

We have to choose – do we engage in aparādha by following and/supporting the various heretical sects that have been acculturated into our Vaiṣṇava society or do we follow Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is as simple as that. There is no room for compromise, negotiation or dispute resolution in our ISKCON society against Śrīla Prabhupāda or the Lord, there is only room for following the orders and instructions of the śuddha bhakta His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The only honourable thing to do would be for the devotees, innocent or guilty of betraying His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda, to step down from their positions as an imitating spiritual masters and formally apologise to their disciples and admit that they obtained their positions by committing Vaiṣṇava apardha and that they were the most unqualified of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples.

Then they would necessarily assist their former disciples in the role of a śikṣā guru to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and correct their misunderstandings and offensive understanding of the eminent position, role and function of His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Simultaneously they must assist the GBC in righting the wrong that they have done over the past three decades by reorganizing the institutions infrastructure and rules and regulations to bring them in line with the instructions and mandates of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The most prominent of these would be to reinstall the Direction of Management mandate by Śrīla Prabhupāda so that ISKCON would be managed properly.

Then it would be most seriously incumbent on them to seek ways in which to gain Śrīla Prabhupāda's forgiveness after which they should prepare for the consequences that will be brought upon them by their sustained abuse and crimes against not only Śrīla Prabhupāda but against the thousands of early disciples whose spiritual lives they helped destroy, what to speak of the offenses that their disciples have also perpetrated against the loyal followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda over the decades.

The pure devotee, His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda, will probably forgive them but how can they expect that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to forgive their great offence against His divine representative and his loyal followers???

The hope is that at least one of them will have the courage and integrity or fearlessness, to begin this process.